

## Test Taking Strategies

This may not be an exhaustive list of strategies to help students be successful in testing situations. However, teaching students to use these strategies will help to reduce test anxiety and to increase productivity.

Before testing ever begins, set high expectations for student achievement. Establish a good rapport with students and encourage them to do their best on all assignments. Be their support system and let them know that we are there to teach them to the best of our abilities.

Establish a good attitude when taking a test:

1. Teach students to take a deep breath and relax before they begin. Remind students that if they become anxious or nervous during the test to take several deep breaths to help them relax before they continue.
2. Both teachers and students should remain positive about the testing experience. Teach students to think positively, "I'm going to do the best I possibly can. I can do this."
3. Realize that everyone has personal strengths and weaknesses when taking tests. Establish a plan for improving weaknesses before the test.
4. Be physically fit for any test. Get a good night's rest, eat a good breakfast, and come to school with a positive attitude.

Know the different kinds of test items:

1. Familiarize students with common kinds of items on tests.
  - Formulas
  - Rules
  - Equations
  - Principles
  - Open-ended responses
  - Essays
  - Distractors
  - Griddable responses
2. Teach students to show all steps and to label their work.

Process strategies:

1. Teach students to answer the questions they know first, then go back and answer the questions or problems that need more time to complete. The decision to skip an item to come back to it later should be made very quickly so that students do not labor over a particular item and become frustrated with the whole test.
2. Teach students to do one step at a time and to think through the question/problem before answering.
3. Teach students to read all of the answer choices before choosing an answer.
4. Teach students to select the best answer for each question and to eliminate clearly wrong answers.
5. Teach students to read and to carefully examine each graph and/or chart.
6. Teach students to question answer choices that contain negative or absolute words.
7. Teach students to read the stem carefully to make sure they know what the question is asking them to do.
8. Teach students to question answer choices that grammatically don't fit the stem.
9. Eliminate distractions in the room.
10. Do not offer incentives for students who finish early or allow other students to encourage slower test takers to "hurry up."
11. For any written responses, especially for the writing assessment, remind students they should not allow emotions to interfere with their responses.

Monitoring strategies:

1. Move around while the students are testing.
2. Make sure students are using a #2 pencil and that they are filling in the bubbles completely and dark enough for the scanner to read their answers.
3. As students begin to finish, remind them to check their work, to make sure that every question has been answered, and to erase any stray marks or "double-bubbles" they may find on their answer document.